

A look beyond the horizon: Our region - our food - our future

How well do we know the region in which we live?

Are there local producers who supply us with food?

Where does our food actually come from?

Under what conditions is the consumption

of our favorite dishes justifiable?



The call to change our way of life: away from lifestyles based on unsustainable consumption, waste of natural resources, degradation of ecosystems and exploitation of people, towards a model that strives to increase the well-being of all people in line with the carrying capacity of our planet, is becoming louder and louder (UNECE, 2011, p.6).

This learning module for school-based vocational education should enable students to have a more differentiated perception of their local environment and sensitize them to the origin of their food. This requires comprehensive reflection and negotiation processes by students. It is not about creating completely correct solutions for a regional sustainable food system, but about initiating critical thinking processes and practical solutions for their favorite dish as an example. By illuminating personal consuming behaviors, local agriculture and sustainability processes, the learning module aims to show that solutions always require a willingness to compromise. It thus contributes to education for sustainable development and shows an example for lessons in the classroom. Through the multi-perspective view of the food system of a selected region, systemic learning can be realized.

Green pedagogy is a didactic concept of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Education, which focuses on the postulates of education for sustainable development. The basis is the constructivist-oriented approaches of didactics, which demand active, self-directed, situational and social learning processes (HAUP, 2016). Green pedagogy concretizes Education for Sustainable Development in selected topics and provides a guideline for the concrete development of lessons in terms of the transformation towards sustainable development (Forstner-Ebhart & Linder, 2017).

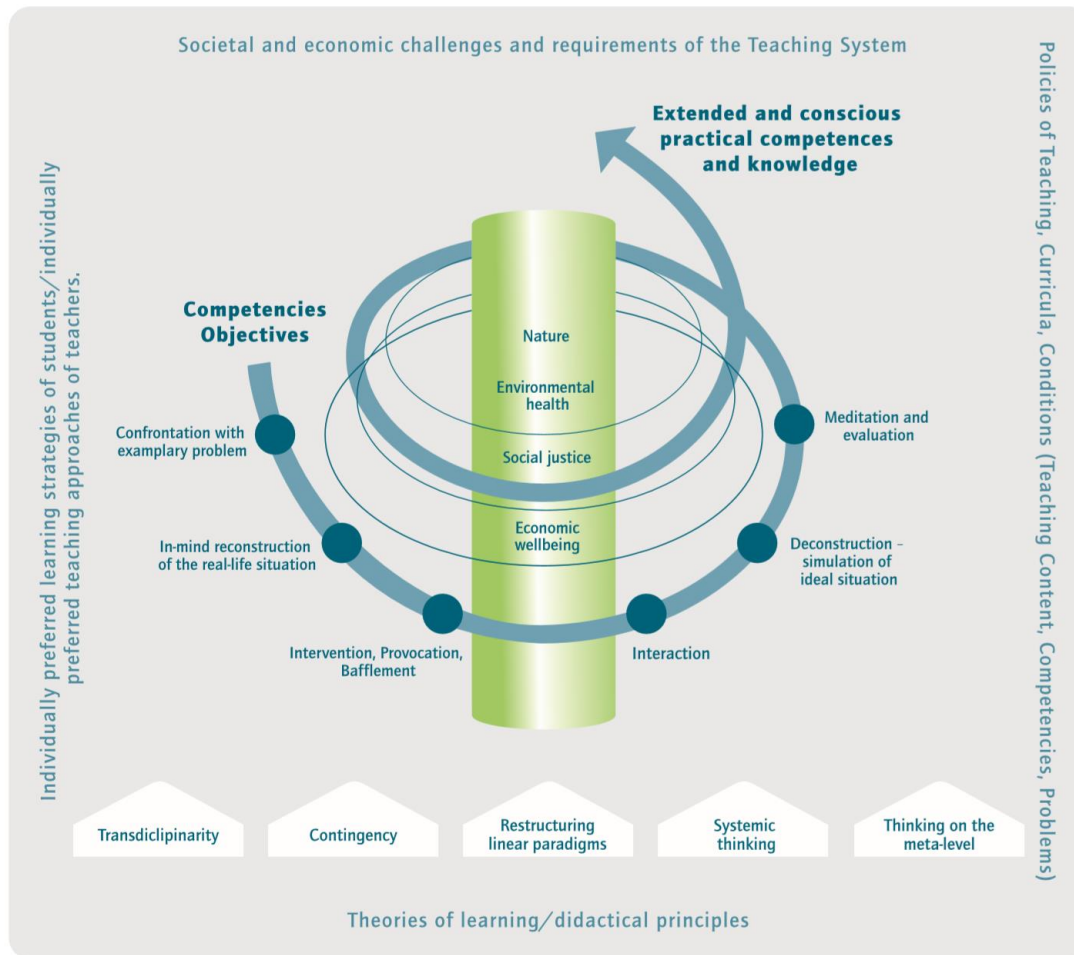


Fig. 1: Didactic concept of green pedagogy © University of Agricultural and Environmental Pedagogy

The figure shows the five didactic principles and illustrates steps or phases in the learning and cognition process, which are also considered in the individual teaching sequences and in the overall learning process of the module. The aim is to inspire learners for responsible consumption and sustainable production, to develop a mindset for sustainability that includes value orientations and mindfulness in addition to knowledge and skills. Transformation processes in the region but also in personal eating habits can thus be triggered by questioning behavioral routines. The attitude-behavior gap should be reduced by jointly

negotiating congruent decisions in learning situations that focus on non-material values or promote pro-social as well as pro-ecological behavior patterns (Stanzus, et al., 2017).

Learners thus acquire curriculum-conforming professional competencies and sustainability-related competencies:

Competencies from the Austrian framework curriculum for agricultural vocational schools:

AB2.5.1.B I can prepare food independently.

UF1.2.C I can interpret figures, data and facts about agriculture and draw conclusions (Farm size, type of farm, farming method).

UF1.1.A I can explain the economic significance of agriculture (Farmer as food producer, degree of self-sufficiency, protection of rural areas).

UF5.6.2.C I can transfer models of "best practice" examples to my own reality (Design concepts and ideas for businesses in own region).

AB1.5.1.C I can evaluate impacts of ecological and economic actions on the circular economy using a concrete case study (Cycles in agricultural production, production vs. deficiencies and excesses).

AB1.6.1.B I can consider regional, ecological, and climatic conditions in the production of agricultural products and assign production possibilities to specific areas (Production conditions in the region: soil, climate, locations, market, economic relationships).

BHM1.1.1.A I can explain the tasks of nutrition (Nutritional, social and economic tasks).

LW2.1.3.B I can evaluate product-specific data from the production of animal and plant foods (Production data and key figures).

AB2.4.1.B I can select foods for a complete diet according to available resources. (Food pyramid, origin of food according to regionality, seasonality and organic quality, region of pleasure).

AB2.5.2.C I can reflect on my own eating behavior (Influencing factors).

Sustainability-related competencies (modified from UNECE, 2011) are to be seen as higher-level competencies that are promoted in the learning module but not evaluated in the lesson as they are not directly measurable competencies. However, they provide a guideline for the learning process and the final reflection:

Students understand the basics of systemic thinking.

Students understand the interdependence of natural, social and economic systems and how they function (human relationships, empathy, identity, appreciation and commitment through knowing each other as consumers and producers).

Students understand that their thoughts, lives, and actions affect sustainable futures.

Students understand the urgent need for change away from unsustainable practices toward greater quality of life, equity, solidarity, and environmental sustainability.

Students understand the need for critical reflection, visionary thinking, and creative thinking in planning for the future and in initiating change processes.

Students are able to consider dilemmas and problems, as well as tensions and conflicts, from different perspectives.

Students are able to use the natural, social, and constructed environment, including their own workplace, as a context and source of professional development.

Students collaborate with others in ways that help them become clear about their own and others' worldviews and understand that alternative systems are conceivable.

Students are individuals who make positive contributions to others and their social and environmental surroundings on a local and global scale.

Students are individuals who are willing to challenge views based on unsustainable actions.

Students are individuals who are critically reflective and practically oriented.

However, the acquisition or promotion of the five key competencies according to Wiek et al. (2011) also plays an important role in the development of this learning module:

- Systemic thinking
- Future-oriented thinking (or forward-looking competence)
- Value-oriented thinking (or normative competence)
- Strategic thinking (or action-oriented competence)
- Cooperation skills (or interpersonal competence)

In this systemic learning process, which discusses different topics of regions depending on the focus, the teacher acts more as a facilitator of the learning process than as a knowledge transmitter. The learners acquire competencies through an active approach to knowledge. The teacher is challenged during the preparation to deal intensively with the local area and to plan the learning process according to the level of knowledge of the learners and the specifics of the area.

The module is divided into different parts of A, B, C, D, E. These parts have to be completed in their entirety, so that a complete learning process is possible. In the module category C there are further modules from C1- C7. These can be completed optionally, depending on interest, focus and time, but are not mandatory.

Learning modul "A look beyond the horizon: Our region - our food - our future"

